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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses issues in the vocational preparation of handicapped students. Prevocational education, career education, and vocational education are differentiated. Components of six legislatively defined vocational education service areas (agriculture, home economics, business and office occupations, marketing and distributive education, trade and industrial education, and industrial arts education) are listed. Three aspects of instructional delivery in vocational education (classroom, shop and/or laboratory instruction; cooperative vocational education programs; and student organizations) are considered. (CL)

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THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE OCCUPATIONAL
PREPARATION OF HANDICAPPED LEARNERS

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Office of Education position statement relating to vocational education of handicapped persons, issued in 1978, assures that an "appropriate comprehensive vocational education" will be provided for every handicapped individual in order to aid this population in developing occupational proficiencies.

To adequately prepare handicapped individuals with occupational skills in existing vocational education programs an interdisciplinary planning approach must be established. Special education personnel, in order to provide the resource help necessary to appropriately support these students in vocational training programs, must develop an awareness of vocational education as a discipline.

The objectives of this article, therefore, are to: (a) present information relative to the content of "prevocational education", "career education", and "vocational education programs, often presumed to be synonymous, (b) introduce the legislatively defined service areas within the vocational education discipline and (c) describe the components of vocational education instructional programs.

WHAT IS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

If handicapped students are to take their rightful place in society as independent contributing members, they must be provided with the skills necessary for them to function in

the competitive labor market. In order for them to develop realistic, appropriate skills it is imperative that access to existing vocational education programs be granted.

The expertise of vocational education personnel must be coordinated with the specialized training of special education personnel if handicapped learners are to be prepared with adequate occupational skills in vocational education programs. Neither educational area can accomplish this complex task alone. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach must be established for these students to successfully develop their vocational potential.

In September 1978 the Office of Education issued a position statement relating to vocational education of handicapped persons. This statement, developed jointly between the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education, states that "...an appropriate comprehensive vocational education will be available and accessible to every handicapped person." It further states:

The provision of appropriate comprehensive vocational education for the handicapped is dependent upon all segments of the education system...Vocational education must provide the education and training to develop occupational competencies. (FR Doc. 78-26727)

Before an "appropriate comprehensive vocational education" can be provided for handicapped individuals the personnel involved in planning vocational education programs for this population must have a clear understanding of what vocational education is. In many cases the terms "prevocational", "career education", and "vocational education" are used interchangeably, although they are not the same. These terms must

be understood before occupational goals can be developed for handicapped students.

Prevocational Education

Prevocational education should be an integral part of the elementary and middle school curriculum for handicapped learners. Without prevocational preparation these students will have a difficult time pursuing vocational subjects when they reach the secondary school level.

Prevocational education attempts to orient students toward practical aspects of occupational training and job placement. Vocational potential and direction can begin to be appraised through prevocational instruction by identifying the employability characteristics displayed by each student. The emphasis of prevocational instruction is on the acquisition of basic skills related to functional academics, personal-social abilities, and general work orientation.

Some examples of prevocational education content are as follows:

A. Personal Skills (development of):

1. Grooming
2. Hygiene
3. Personal economics
4. Proper dress
5. Personal finances (banking, credit, insurance, taxes, savings)
6. Self care skills
7. Leisure time activities

B. Attitudes and Habits (development of):

1. Safety
2. Responsibility
3. Self concept
4. Dependability
5. Communication skills
6. Perseverance
7. Punctuality
8. Completing assignments and tasks
9. Ability to work steadily
10. Ability to work unsupervised
11. Cooperation
12. Following directions
13. Reacting to pressure
14. Reacting to constructive criticism

C. Salable Skills (development of):

1. Use of basic tools, equipment and materials
2. Getting to and from work
3. Arithmetic skills (basic computation)
4. Reading skills
5. Survival vocabulary recognition

D. Basic Understandings and Information (development of):

1. Occupational information
2. Employment information
3. General rules and regulations
4. Realistic occupational goals
5. Problem-solving techniques

6. Safety precautions

E. Physical Skills and Abilities (development of):

1. Strength
2. Fine motor skills
3. Gross motor skills
4. Visual perception and discrimination
5. Adaptability
6. Eye-hand coordination
7. Stamina
8. Muscular control and coordination
9. Manipulative abilities
10. Reactions and reflexes
11. Adjustment to disability (appropriate compensation)

Career Education

Career education, as defined by Hoyt, is "the total effort of public education and the community aimed at helping all individuals to become familiar with the work values of work-oriented society, to integrate these values into their personal value system, and to implement these values into their personal lives in such a way that work becomes possible, meaningful, and satisfying to each individual." (Phelps and Lutz, 1977, p. 28). This process attempts to provide individuals with experiences which will help them to develop positive attitudes, knowledge and skills relating to the world of work.

The four phases described below represent a comprehensive career education program:

A. PHASE I: Career Awareness (Primary Level)

1. Objectives include-

- *development of basic skills
- *development of recognition of the significance and value of work
- *awareness of many occupational opportunities
- *expansion of individual career interests

B. PHASE II: Career Orientation (Intermediate Level)

1. Objectives include-

- *continuation of basic skills development
- *exposure to a wide range of occupations through cluster exploration
- *provision of hands-on experiences in simulated work environments
- *provision of career guidance services

C. PHASE III: Career Exploration (Junior High Level)

1. Objectives include-

- *continuation of basic skills development
- *provision of occupational exploration experiences to assist students in evaluating their interests, abilities and needs as they relate to the world of work
- *provision of opportunities for students to observe and/or interact with workers
- *coordinate academic and basic subject matter with occupational preparation requirements
- *introduction of occupational clusters or groupings

D. PHASE IV: Career Preparation (Secondary Level)

1. Objectives include-

- *provision of specific skills in a selected occupational cluster(s) in preparation for job entry and/or further training
- *continuation of career guidance/counseling services
- *provision of work experience opportunities

Vocational Education

Vocational education programs offer relevant hands-on learning experiences and an introduction to the mandates of the world of work. This discipline combines the proficiencies and basic skills required for employment with the applied knowledge derived from the general educational program to identify a realistic career goal for each individual. In completing a vocational program, handicapped students will possess the knowledge and skills that will enable them to function in the competitive labor market and enter society as contributing members.

The role of vocational education in the public school setting is to prepare students for work. This preparation entails the development of job entry level skills in broad or specific occupational clusters.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AREAS

Vocational education is composed of six major service areas. These legislatively defined areas include: (a) agriculture, (b) home economics, (c) business and office occupations, (d) marketing and distributive education, (e)

trade and industrial education, and (f) industrial arts education.

Each of the service areas mentioned above offer specific programs designed to deliver the skills necessary to assume entry-level positions within the group of occupations related to the service area with the exception of industrial arts education which is considered as a prevocational or exploratory program. Although only two of the service areas have specific cooperative vocational education programs, the use of cooperative on-the-job training activities and experiences is emphasized in all of the service areas through incorporation in classroom instruction.

Each of these areas also has a specific student organization affiliate. Student organization activities are also incorporated directly into the vocational education training program, both through integration in classroom, shop and/or laboratory instruction and through coordination with cooperative vocational education program experiences. The service areas are introduced and outlined for the reader on the charts provided.

COMPONENTS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Occupational success for handicapped individuals depends largely on the vocational preparation that they receive in the public school sector. Special education personnel do not have the background skills or the technical expertise to provide these students with the necessary skills for employment. It is for this reason that vocational education is the key element in the cooperative planning process to prepare these individuals for

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AREAS

Agriculture

Program Offerings:

- A. Production Agriculture
(Farming and Ranching)
- B. Forestry
- C. Ornamental Horticulture
- D. Farm Machinery-
Operation &
Maintenance
- E. Agriculture Power
Mechanics
- F. Agri-Business
(Ag Sales and Service)
- G. Conservation and
Natural Resources

Cooperative Program:

not named but can be
part of instruction

Youth Club Affiliate:

Future Farmers of
America (FFA)

Industrial Arts

Program Offerings:

- A. Communication
- B. Construction
- C. Manufacturing
- D. Transportation

Cooperative Program:

N/A

Youth Club Affiliate:

American Industrial Arts
Student Association
(AIASA)

Home Economics

Program Offerings:

- A. Child and Family
- B. Clothing and Textiles
Management
- C. Food and Nutrition
Management
- D. Home Furnishings
- E. Personal Development
- F. Home Management and Health

Cooperative Program:

not named but can be part
of instruction

Youth Club Affiliate:

Future Homemakers of
America (FHA)

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AREAS

Business & Office

Program Offerings:

- A. Stenographic Cluster
- B. Clerical Cluster
- C. Business Management
- D. Data Processing
- E. Intensive Office Procedures
(simulated office experiences-
credit rather than paid
experiences)
- F. Components:
 - Accounting
 - Work Processing
 - Shorthand
 - Typing
 - General Business
 - Free Enterprise
 - Personal Finance
 - Consumer Education
 - Secretarial Procedures
 - Business Law
 - Business English
 - Business Math

Cooperative Program:

Vocational Office Training (VOT)

Youth Club Affiliate:

Future Business Leaders
of America (FBLA)

Marketing and
Distributive Education

Program Offerings:

- A. Marketing
- B. Human Relations
- C. Basic Skills
- D. Economics
- E. Salesmanship
- F. Communication
- G. Display
- H. Merchandising
- I. Operations

Cooperative program:

part of instruction

Youth Club Affiliate:

DECA

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AREAS

Trade & Industrial

Program Offerings:

- A. Construction
- B. Cosmetology
- C. Drafting
- D. Electronics
- E. Electro-Mechanics
- F. Health Occupations*
- G. Power Transportation
- H. Food Services
- I. Graphic Arts
- J. Auto Body
- K. Others unique to geographic location

- Examples:
- 1. welding
 - 2. woodworking
 - 3. metal working
 - 4. carpentry
 - 5. machine shop
 - 6. plumbing
 - 7. plastic technology
 - 8. sheet metal work

*may be complete service area in some states

Cooperative Program:

Diversified Cooperative
Training

Youth Club Affiliate:

VICA

*Health Occupations Education (examples):

Dental (Hygiene, Assisting, Laboratory)
Nursing (Practical, Assistant)
School Health Aide
Radiation Therapy (Technology Aide)
Surgical Technician
Physical Therapy Assistant
Respiratory Therapy Assistant
Central Service Assistant
Home Health Aide
Physical Therapy Assistant
Dental Assistant
Emergency Assistant
Medical Office Aide
Laboratory Aide
Dietary Assistant
Housekeeping Assistant
Ward Clerk

employment. Three components or instructional delivery vehicles are involved in vocational education. These three components are (a) classroom, shop and/or laboratory instruction, (b) cooperative vocational education programs and (c) student organizations.

Classroom, Shop and/or Laboratory Instruction

Vocational education instruction provides experiences which will enable individuals to develop new knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for success in occupational endeavors. This instruction is based on existing employment demands as well as inventoried information that lends well to predicting future trends in occupational areas.

Within the broad core curricula developed for each occupational area, specific training geared to entry level jobs is delivered. Success in vocational education instruction is performance based; salable skills are the end-product of vocational education programs. Instruction is generally self-paced with an emphasis on the standards of quality and productivity defined by a particular occupational area.

Shop and laboratory settings simulate or comprise actual job situations. The facilities and equipment used for instruction parallel or reproduce the facilities and equipment found in on-the-job situations. All activities developed for use in the laboratory settings are meaningful in that they prepare students for actual situations which exist in the world of work.

Vocational teachers must develop specific competencies in order to foster successful instructional training programs.

These competencies include: (a) working with advisory committees, (b) planning and developing the goals and philosophy of the vocational education program, (c) identifying and developing program objectives, (d) utilizing specific teaching techniques, (e) coordinating instruction with on-the-job training stations, (f) updating technical skills by keeping up with advancements in the field, (g) operating and supervising the activities of the student organization, (h) providing vocational guidance services, (i) providing placement services, (j) assessing student performance and (k) evaluating the effectiveness of the vocational program.

With the assistance of special education personnel as support staff, vocational education teachers can utilize these proficiencies to successfully integrate handicapped students into existing vocational education programs.

Cooperative Vocational Education Programs

Cooperative vocational education programs are an important component of vocational education instruction. Specific cooperative education programs serving vocational education service areas include: Vocational Office Training Program (Business and Office Occupations) and Diversified Cooperative Training Program (Trade and Industrial Education). The remaining service areas, though they do not have specific cooperative programs, incorporate the participation in cooperative training situations into vocational program planning.

Cooperative vocational education programs involve coordinated arrangements with employers so that students can receive part-time employment via on-the-job training situations

in addition to part-time related vocational instruction at school. The major goal of cooperative vocational education programs is to emphasize and strengthen the crucial relationship between the educational program and the world of work. Through participation in cooperative work activities students learn about current labor market demands, working conditions and the importance of positive work attitudes and habits.

Youth Group Organizations

Youth group organizations are another important component of vocational education programs. Each service area has a specific youth group associated with it. These groups include: (a) Future Farmers of America (Agriculture), (b) Future Homemakers of America (Home Economics), (c) Future Business Leaders of America (Business and Office Occupations), (d) Distributive Education Clubs of America (Marketing and Distributive Education), (e) American Industrial Arts Students Association (Industrial Arts), and (f) Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (Trade and Industrial Education).

Participation in these organizations provides students with an opportunity to learn about the occupations included in the vocational service area. Youth group activities enable students to develop vocational, social and leadership abilities that will help them to achieve occupational success. They also provide their membership with incentives and guidance in developing realistic career goals and a healthy respect for the world of work.

Students who actively participate in youth club activities

develop pride in their work, build their confidence and self-esteem, experience career exploration activities, develop positive interpersonal relationships and become familiar with the employment practices in the industrial sector.

SUMMARY

In order for handicapped individuals to develop realistic, appropriate skills necessary for them to function in the competitive labor market they must be granted access to existing vocational education programs. To accomplish this objective special education personnel and vocational education instructors must combine expertise in an interdisciplinary planning process. Neither discipline can accomplish this complex task alone.

Special education personnel, in providing the resources to support handicapped learners enrolled in regular vocational education programs, should develop an understanding of what vocational education is. Too often terms such as "pre-vocational education," "career education" and "vocational education" are used synonymously, though they are quite different in nature.

Prevocational education emphasizes the acquisition of basic skills related to functional academics, personal-social abilities and general work orientation. Examples of pre-vocational education content include: (a) personal skills, (b) attitudes and habits, (c) saleable skills, (d) basic information and understanding and (e) physical skills and abilities.

Coordinated career education activities enable individuals to relate their abilities and interests to the world of work so that they may identify realistic career goals and prepare for the labor

market with appropriate saleable skills. A comprehensive career education program includes four phases in the areas of career awareness, career orientation, career exploration and career preparation.

Vocational education combines the proficiencies and basic skills required for employment with the applied knowledge from general education to provide individuals with the skills that will enable them to function in the competitive labor market. This includes the development of job entry level skills in broad or specific occupational clusters.

Legislatively defined service areas in vocational education include: (a) agriculture, (b) home economics, (c) business and office occupations, (d) marketing and distributive education, (e) trade and industrial education and (f) industrial arts education. Each of these service areas offer specific programs designed to deliver the skills necessary to assume entry-level positions within the groups of occupations related to the service area.

Instructional delivery vehicles utilized in vocational education programs include classroom, shop and/or laboratory instruction, cooperative vocational education programs and youth group organizations. Each component provides individuals with skills and knowledge necessary to emphasize and strengthen the crucial relationship between the educational program and the world of work.

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